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NOTES ON ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES.

TWO BABYLONIAN SEAL-CYLINDERS.

The two seals, of which the accompanying figures (10 and 11) are copies, are of a type extremely rare, if we may judge from the fact that it is not, so far as I am aware, represented among the hundreds



FIG. 10.

of seal-cylinders found in Cullimore's, Lajard's, Ménant's, and other collections and publications. Both are engraved somewhat less than



FIG. 11.

the natural size.¹ The larger of the two (fig. 10) belongs to Dr. A. Blau, a merchant in Mesopotamia, who was good enough to allow

¹ The height of fig. 10 is $1\frac{1}{8}$ in., that of fig. 11 is $1\frac{1}{2}$ in.

me to take a wax impression of it, with the privilege of publication. It is of black marble, and in a state of perfect preservation.

The other (fig. 11) I have never seen, but I obtained ink impressions of it on paper, done in the oriental style by a dealer in antiquities in Baghdad, in whose possession it once was. These impressions give an imperfect idea of the condition of the seal, but I judge it to be well preserved, and presume it also is of black marble.

A single fine cylinder figured (enlarged) in Lajard's *Culte de Mithra*, pl. XII. 5 (fig. 12), may throw light upon these cylinders. The material and ownership is given as unknown to M. Lajard, who received a copy of it from Constantinople. The composition is entirely different: the subject belongs wholly to common life; the figures are arranged in an upper and a lower register, and we miss



FIG. 12.

the remarkable figure of the man astride of the bird. On the other hand, the free composition, and the sheep and goats headed by the human figures, are sufficient to show that the three belong to the same period and school of art. Indeed, the gate in fig. 12, so well drawn, out of which the sheep are driven, is probably represented in fig. 10 by the gridiron-shaped object to which the flock is being led.

The correspondence between the first two cylinders is very marked. Observe that the group formed by the man astride the bird, and the dogs under him, is precisely the same in both. In each a kneeling man holds a tablet. In one a seated man, and in the other two seated men are before a vase. In each, a man is driving a flock of sheep led by a goat. In each, a man stands with uplifted right hand, holding an object in his left hand. The bird in the tree, the

lions, one kneeling figure, and the common Babylonian seven stars are peculiar to the larger cylinder. The two were possibly made by the same artist.

Babylonian literature and art, so far as I can recall, give no explanation of the bird bearing the man. The Zu Bird, described in Smith's *Chaldean Genesis*, seems to have no relation to it. It reminds me rather of Ganymede and the eagle, or of the mighty roc of Arabic fable, which may very possibly have been inherited from such a Babylonian original as is figured here. The bird with outspread wings, but unmounted, occurs, especially with goats, in a number of curious cylinders.

The very freedom of the design suggests an early and not a late period. The art of the early Chaldean period of the discoveries of Telloh, and of King Gudea, was much less conventional than that of a later period. This indication is supported by the inscription on fig. 12, which is in the most archaic Babylonian style. Niffer, from which the first cylinder is said to have come, is one of the very oldest sites in Babylonia. Black marble is a favorite material of the older cylinders, and the shape and large size are further indications of great antiquity. I am inclined to believe that the three cylinders belong to Southern Babylonia, and to a period from two to three thousand years before Christ.

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